



COURT INTERPRETER COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
AOC SEATAC OFFICE  
FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 2011  
11:00 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.

Members Present: Frank Maiocco, Mike McElroy, Theresa Smith, Sam Mattix, Kristi Cruz (by telephone), Leticia Camacho (by telephone), Judge Judith Hightower (by telephone), and Judge Gregory Sybolt (by telephone).

AOC Staff: Katrin Johnson, Vicki Marin.

Public Participant: Connie Maipi

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**1. General Business**

Justice Owens was unable to participate today. The meeting is being chaired by Frank Maiocco.

**Welcome**

Connie Maipi of Speedo Transactions came to observe the meeting. Vicki Marin, JIS Business Liaison of the AOC Information Services Division spoke briefly about the new IT Governance procedure.

**Approval of February Minutes**

The minutes of the February minutes were unanimously approved.

**2. Issues Committee Report**

The Issues Committee sought clarification from the Commission about the scope of their current project – to propose statutory language to create consistency with Title VI standards. Title VI addresses provision of interpreting in four contexts: (1) all courtroom hearings; (2) other courts services outside the courtroom; (3) court mandated programs and classes; and (4) communication with court-appointed professionals.

The Commission requested the Issues Committee to address all four contexts at this time, allowing for further conversation at later meetings about possibility narrowing the scope.

**3. Education Committee Report**

The Education Committee has not met since the last Commission meeting. Updates were provided on evaluations from Judicial College in February, and plans for the

plenary presentation at the District and Municipal Court Judges Association Spring Conference in June.

#### **4. Video Remote Interpreting Pilot Project**

Plans are underway with the Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Pilot Project at Grant County District Court. Per judges' request, laptops will be set up at the bench and two counsel tables, so that persons at all three locations will see and be visible to the interpreter.

The AOC is providing the funds for purchasing the equipment for one courtroom. The company will provide three months of unlimited interpretation by a court certified Spanish interpreter. Staff will survey participants during the pilot to determine the appropriateness of VRI in the courtroom. Installation, demonstration and training are scheduled for Friday, May 27.

It was recommended that there be further review of research on VRI techniques to ensure quality communication. It was also recommended that there be limitations on the amount of time of simultaneous interpreting, and abide by national standards for team interpreting.

#### **5. Interpreter Testing & Training Update**

The 2011 written exam was administered in February. There were 194 testing candidates, and the overall passing rate was 27%, which is lower than previous years', which were approximately 35-40%. Those passing the exam are required next to attend the Orientation on May 14 in Bellevue, or May 21 in Yakima.

In early June the Court Interpreter Program is offering a 4-day skills building workshop. It is intended for candidates seeking to become certified. In conjunction with that, there will be a one-day continuing education workshop for interpreters already certified/registered.

At the last meeting it was requested that staff report out on results of administering the Versant English Test. No tests have been administered since the last meeting, but will likely occur following May Orientation.

#### **6. Interpreter Commission Translation Standard**

In 2008 the Interpreter Commission established a one-page translation protocol, setting standards for the qualifications of translators, and the general overall process of translating, editing and reviewing. Recently the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts released a comprehensive guide for translation of legal documents. The Commission agreed that this resource should be used to revisit and expand the Washington translation protocol, to promote a uniform standard for translating court documents. It was recommended that an ad hoc committee be formed to work on the project. Katrin will send an email to the full Commission soliciting volunteers for the project.

## 7. Court Interpreter Funding

**Program Evaluation:** The Commission discussed the need to conduct an evaluation to measure the effects and benefits of state funding of court interpreter expenses. Although data is being collected by participating courts, there is no baseline data reflecting interpreter usage prior to state funding, by which to compare costs or increased usage of certified interpreters. The members expressed an interest in seeing a demonstration at the next meeting of the type of data received by the AOC, and reports that are available on interpreter usage.

To identify and document the effects of state funding of interpreter services, it was recommended that staff take the following steps: (1) work with the court manager representative to create a formal survey of courts that receive funding, to identify the improvements made, and challenges faced; (2) collect some stories and examples of improvements; and (3) document the information in a report. Hopefully this informal study can be used later as a stepping-stone for a more formal study on the program's impact.

**Funding Guidelines:** The Commission discussed the current funding guidelines which set the standards for reimbursable events, and recommends that the following edits be made:

- A. References to “up to two hours” should be changed to “two hours.” Payment of a minimum of two hours has become industry standard in Washington, and should be encouraged through use of State funds.
- B. The Commission discussed whether to modify the travel time reimbursement calculations, but came to no conclusion. More information would be needed from the courts on how they treat travel time, and what kind of standards would best fit.
- C. The guidelines allow reimbursement of Language Line telephonic interpreting for out-of-court communications. The Commission recommends that reference instead be made to “companies that contract with the State.”
- D. The Commission supports changing the standards under Sign Language to only allow reimbursement of the use of SC:L (specialist certificate: legal) certified interpreters. Only reimbursing legally certified sign language interpreters parallels the standards used for spoken language interpreters.

## 8. ABA Standards for Language Access in Courts

The ABA Standards are close to completion, and are currently at 112 pages. It is intended to act as a guidebook to assist courts in developing a comprehensive system of providing language access. The final steps in the process involve seeking support for the Standards from other ABA and judicial branch groups, as well as seeking grants to assist courts in implementing the Standards.

## **9. Other Business**

The Commission had a discussion on what members should do when they have identified concerns about individual certified/registered interpreters, but such concerns do not arise from poor performance at actual court hearings. The Commission concluded that dealing with such concerns calls for subjectivity, could create a “slippery slope,” and falls outside the jurisdiction of the Commission.

The annual WASCLA (Washington State Coalition for Language Access) will hold its annual Summit on October 14-15 at the Red Lion Hotel in Olympia.

## **10. Adjourn**